

# US 93 FISH AND WILDLIFE CROSSINGS

## 3. Rail Link Fish & Wildlife Crossing

### Evapo Segment

This crossing currently serves as a wildlife travel corridor for many species including deer, elk, coyotes and bears. The crossing could be enhanced with fencing on either side of the highway and increased plant cover.

### Design Recommendations

Recommended crossing type: *Multi-span bridge*

Approximate dimensions: *Existing structure*

### Notes:

Continue 8' page wire fencing along both sides of road. Begin fencing north of Evapo; continue to East Fork Finley Creek. Provide cattle guards for connecting roads and driveways.

Jump outs are desirable on either side of the rail link bridge because studies have shown that animals trapped inside R.O.W. will turn around rather than cross structures.

### Criteria for locations of crossings:

1. **Winter tracking** transects from south of Evapo to the Sheep Ranch Inn were completed by the tribal wildlife program during the period 11/91- 4/92. The segment of road from the railroad ROW extending east of Joe's Smoke Ring exhibited the most wildlife activity during each of the transects.
2. Camera units were placed along nearby existing **summer game trails** from 4/92-1/93. Results indicated substantial and regular use of the trails by white-tailed deer, elk, moose, mountain lions, black bears, snowshoe hares, & bobcats. Aerial Surveys of big game were conducted in the area in March 1992. Deer, elk, and bighorn sheep were observed.
3. **Road Kill Data** - In 1992 tribal fish & wildlife recorded observations of dead deer, one black bear, and a calf moose. Tribal data from 1/95-10/98 combined with MDT data from 12/97-1/00 indicated 7 kills in this area.
4. **Habitat** - Excellent continuous habitat. The Evapo area may represent the last opportunity to maintain an effective link between the Mission/Bob Marshall complex and the Bitterroot Range. Gray wolf activity in the Ninemile Divide Area indicates use of the Evapo corridor. Scientists have identified this area as the best potential linkage area for grizzly bears. This is also the most likely spot in the corridor for lynx to cross.
5. **Engineering Practicality** - Existing structure could easily be enhanced with fencing. Additional vegetative cover would increase cover for animals.



## US 93 DESIGN DISCUSSIONS

Project Committee:

Evapo to Polson, Montana

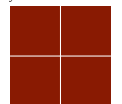
Montana Department of Transportation

Federal Highway Administration

The Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Nation

Prime Consultant: Skillings-Connolly, Inc. - Consulting Engineers

J O N E S



J O N E S

Architects & Landscape Architects